

**ARS   CSREES   ERS   NASS**

***Bulletin***

**Title:** Creditable Service for Annual Leave Accrual

**Number:** 06-420

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**Originating Office:** Human Resources Division, Office of the  
Deputy Director, Human Resources  
Operations, AFM/ARS

**Distribution:** All REE Employees

This Bulletin establishes interim guidance for crediting non-Federal experience or active duty uniformed service that would otherwise not be creditable for annual leave accrual purposes in REE.

## **Introduction**

On October 30, 2004, the President signed the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act to provide Federal managers with the tools needed to meet human capital challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to include the ability to fill vacant positions caused by changing technologies and baby boomer retirements with a skilled, experienced workforce. One provision of the Act provides agencies with the authority to grant a newly appointed or reappointed employee credit for prior work experience that otherwise would not be creditable for the purpose of determining the employee's annual leave accrual rate. This flexibility will allow the REE agencies to better compete with the private sector by offering seasoned workers better leave benefits than what otherwise would be allowed.

The Office of Personnel Management issued interim regulations to implement this provision of the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004. This Bulletin sets policy, assigns responsibility, and explains the rules and procedures regarding the use of this important flexibility in the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area. REE is comprised of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS); Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES); Economic Research Service (ERS); and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

## **Policy**

It is REE's policy to utilize every possible tool available in order to hire and maintain a highly qualified, diverse workforce. Therefore, the agency's approving official may choose to offer newly appointed or reappointed employees credit for non-Federal work experience or uniformed service as outlined below when such an offer is necessary to achieve an important agency mission or performance goal. All decisions to offer this incentive will be determined with no regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation, marital or family status, race, color, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, or non disqualifying disability.

Selecting officials, human resources specialists, employees, and applicants are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements of this program. Any questions should be referred to the appropriate Human Resources Division (HRD) servicing human resources specialist, hereafter referred to as servicing specialist.

## **Authority**

- Section 202(a) of the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-411, dated October 20, 2004)
- Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 63
- Federal Register, Vol. 70, No. 82, dated April 29, 2005
- Departmental Notice 4060-001, Interim Creditable Service for Annual Leave Accrual, dated March 13, 2006

## Delegation of Authority

The following officials are delegated authority to approve the credit of non-Federal work experience or uniformed service in accordance with the guidelines specified in this document.

<b>In ARS</b>	Office/Staff/Area Directors and Division Directors;
<b>In CSREES</b>	The Administrator must approve the Associate/Deputy Administrators' recommendations;
<b>In ERS</b>	Division Directors;
<b>In NASS</b>	Administrator

**Additionally, all requests must be signed and have the concurrence of a Team Leader in the Operating Branches, Human Resources Division (HRD). All authorizations for Senior Scientific Research Service (SSRS) positions must be approved by the Administrator.**

## Eligibility

All newly appointed employees and reappointed employees following a break in service of at least 90 calendar days from the date of their last period of civilian Federal employment are eligible to be considered for this incentive. The use of this authority has been authorized for all Senior Scientific Research Service positions, National Program Leaders, Research Leaders, and all supervisory positions at the GS-14 level and above (as defined in the General Schedule Supervisory Guide). While selections for these position categories will still require the requisite approvals (as defined above) to document the amount of non-Federal and uniformed service to be credited, vacancy announcements for these position categories will include a statement that "Service credit for annual leave accrual will be granted for directly related non-Federal work experience or uniformed service for employees appointed provided that there has been a break in service from civilian Federal employment of at least 90 calendar days". The use of this authority may be considered for other positions on a case-by-case basis.

## Creditable Service

### Directly Related Experience

Only experience which is directly related to the position being filled can be credited. For this purpose, **directly related experience** is defined as experience which has equipped the employee with the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the duties of the position.

The description of duties and responsibilities contained in the position classification standard, along with the position description, should be used to identify the kinds of work experience that would meet this requirement.

## **Amount of Service Credited**

At management's discretion, an amount of service equal to all, some, or none of the directly related work experience as described above can be credited. The amount of service credited can never exceed the actual amount of directly related service. Full-time credit can be awarded for full-time service. Less than full-time service is prorated (e.g., a person working 20 hours a week for a 12-month period can be credited with up to 6 months service).

## **Double Credit**

An employee can only receive credit for service one time. Double credit cannot be awarded for any service to include a period of employment for service that is otherwise creditable under existing leave regulations or credited under this provision while on a previous appointment.

## **Approval Procedures**

Please note: The determination to offer this flexibility must be documented and approved before the potential employee can be officially offered the benefit.

## **Recommending Official**

Contacts servicing specialist for advice and guidance.

Initiates form REE-11, New Hire Recruitment Incentives, by checking the appropriate blocks to indicate "Creditable Service for Leave Accrual" and "Creditable Non-Federal Experience" or "Uniformed Service" (a DD-214 or other acceptable documentation is required to show service was active duty honorable uniformed service); attaching supporting documentation (e.g., resume) **and** a narrative statement which explains how the skills and experience the employee possesses are: (1) essential to the new position; (2) were acquired through performance in a non-Federal position or active uniformed service, as appropriate; (3) directly relate to the duties of the position to which he/she is being appointed; and, (4) necessary to achieve an important agency mission or performance goal; and signing/dating the form. Form REE-11 can be found at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/divisions/hrd/hrdhomepage/webforms/ree11.PDF>.

Forwards the completed form REE-11, New Hire Recruitment Incentives, and supporting documentation to the second level supervisor for their review.

## **Second Level Supervisor and Any Other Required Level Up to Final Approving Official**

If disapproved, returns the unsigned form REE-11 and supporting documentation to the

selecting official.

If approved, signs and forwards form REE-11 and supporting documentation to the next level approving Official or servicing team leader, as appropriate, for review, final approval, and processing.

## **Lead Human Resources Specialist (Team Leader)**

Makes a decision to approve or disapprove and notifies the servicing specialist of such decision.

If approved, conveys this information to the potential employee, personally or through the servicing specialist, when making the official offer.

## **Effective Date**

Creditable service under this provision is granted to the employee upon the effective date of his/her initial appointment or reappointment to the agency. Since there is no provision in law or regulation for retroactive approval, sufficient time must be allowed to approve creditable non-Federal work experience/active uniformed service and establish the reporting date. The credit of non-Federal work experience for leave accrual purposes cannot be authorized after the appointment/reappointment has been affected.

## **Service Agreement**

A potential employee will be required to sign form REE-12D, Creditable Service for Leave Accrual Service Agreement, before service may be credited for leave accrual.

## **Documenting Service Credit**

All Non-Federal service or active duty uniformed service must be documented on the SF-144, Statement of Prior Federal Service. Credit is to be granted in terms of years and months, and the exact number of years and months of credit being granted is recorded in Section 5 for civilian service and Section 7 for uniformed service. Include a note at the top of page 2 to indicate, "This documents creditable non-Federal service or active uniformed service work experience that otherwise would not be credited." The SF-144 can be located at [http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf\\_fill/SF144.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/SF144.pdf).

## **Separations/Transfers**

If an employee separates or transfers, prior to completing one full year of continuous service with the Department of Agriculture, they are not entitled to retain service credit granted under this provision. Therefore, prior to separating/transferring, the servicing specialist will establish a

new service computation date for leave, subtracting the credit that was provided for non-Federal or military work experience. However, all unused annual leave accrued and accumulated by the employee remains to the credit of the employee and must be transferred to the new agency or liquidated by a lump-sum payment as appropriate.

**After completing one full year of continuous service with the Department of Agriculture,** the employee is permanently credited with service granted under this provision for the duration of the employee's career. The employee's service computation date for leave would not be recalculated if the employee separates or transfers.

## **Summary of Responsibilities**

### **Agency Heads**

#### **In ARS**

- Delegates authority to review and approve/disapprove creditable service for leave accrual.

#### **In CSREES**

- Approves/disapproves Associate/Deputy Administrators' recommendations.

#### **In ERS**

- Delegates authority to review and approve/disapprove creditable service for leave accrual.

#### **In NASS**

- Approves/disapproves recommendations.

**Office/Staff/Area and Division Directors in ARS; Associate/Deputy Administrators in CSREES; Division and Associate Division Directors in ERS; and Recommending Officials in NASS**

In ARS and ERS

- Reviews and approves/disapproves use of creditable service for leave accrual.

In CSREES and NASS

- Recommends use of creditable service for leave accrual.

## **Second Level Supervisors and Any Other Required Intermediate Level**

- Reviews and recommends approval/disapproval.

## **All Supervisors, REE Mission Area**

- Initiates requests for use of creditable service for leave accrual as appropriate when making selections.

## **Servicing Specialists, HRD, AFM**

- Advises selecting officials on the use of creditable service for leave accrual.
- Provides information on crediting service for leave accrual to supervisors and applicants.
- Calculates service computation date based on amount of service credited.
- Makes official offers.

## **Lead Human Resources Specialists (Team Leaders)**

- Ensures documentation is complete and appropriate.
- Approves/disapproves recommendations for use of creditable service for leave accrual.

## **Employment Officer, Office of the Deputy Director, Human Resources Operations, HRD, AFM**

Develops policy guidance on the use of Creditable Service for Annual Leave Accrual.

Reviews the use of Creditable Service for Annual Leave in REE to determine its effectiveness and recommends changes needed to resolve problem areas and/or to ensure compliance with requirements.

Karen M. Brownell  
Director  
Human Resources Division



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Research, Education, and Economics

**Creditable Service for Annual Leave Accrual  
SERVICE AGREEMENT**

I hereby agree to remain in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - \_\_\_\_\_  
*Agency*

for the period beginning \_\_\_\_\_ and ending on \_\_\_\_\_. I understand and agree that if I separate or transfer prior to completing one full year of continuous service with the Department of Agriculture, I am not entitled to retain service credit granted under the Creditable Service for Leave Accrual provision. Therefore, prior to separating or transferring, a new service computation date for leave will be established for me by subtracting the credit that was provided for non-Federal or military work experience. All unused annual leave I accrued and accumulated, however, will remain to my credit and will be transferred to the new agency or liquidated by a lump-sum payment as appropriate.

I understand that if I separate or transfer after I've completed one full year of continuous service, the service granted to me under the Creditable Service for Leave Accrual provision will be made permanent. If I separate or transfer thereafter, my service computation date for leave will not be recalculated.

Signature of Employee

Date

Enclosure 1

## NEW HIRE RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES

1. NAME (Last, First, MI)		2. POSITION TITLE, SERIES, GRADE, STEP	
3. TENTATIVE REPORTING DATE	4. LOCATION	5. REPORTING AGENCY	

<b>RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL OF</b> <i>(check appropriate box(es)):</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> Pre Employment Interviews <i>(Attach list of all candidates)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment Incentives <i>(Complete Section A below)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Travel and Transportation Expenses <i>(Complete Section B below)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Superior Qualifications/Advanced Step <i>(See Section C below and attach REE-13)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Student Loan Repayment <i>(Complete Section D below)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Advance in Pay <i>(Complete Section E below)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Creditable Service for Leave Accrual <i>(Complete Section F below)</i> _____ Creditable Non-Federal Experience _____ Uniform Service <i>(attach DD-214 or other acceptable documentation)</i>	<b>JUSTIFICATION</b> <i>(check all that apply):</i>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shortage of qualified applicants  <input type="checkbox"/> Unique Qualifications  <input type="checkbox"/> Urgency to Fill Position  <input type="checkbox"/> Labor Market Conditions                 </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recent Turnover Rate  <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Technology  <input type="checkbox"/> Salary Compatibility/Offer Issues  <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(explain in narrative statement)</i> </div> </div>
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**SECTION A. RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES** *(Attach General Service Agreement REE-12 signed by selectee)*

<b>Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Up to 25% of Base Salary _____ % of Salary equivalent to \$ _____	<b>Demonstration Project</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> One Lump Sum payment (upon EOD) of \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred (payment within 36 months of EOD) Select <b>one</b> of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> One Lump Sum of \$ _____ payable on _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Incremental payments <b>(attach payment agreement signed by selectee).</b>
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**SECTION B. PAYMENT OF TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES** *(Attach Service Agreement signed by Selectee)*

☐ 1. Travel and Transportation Expenses in accordance with FTR's (for New Hires not under Demonstration Project)

☐ 2. Travel and Transportation Expenses (for Demonstration Project New Hires):

☐ a. All expenses below in item b.

☐ b. Options

<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Per diem allowance for immediate family	<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Purchase of residence expenses	<input type="checkbox"/> (7) Shipment and Storage of Household Goods
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) House hunting trip travel and expenses	<input type="checkbox"/> (5) Temporary quarters subsistence expenses	<input type="checkbox"/> (8) Miscellaneous Allowances
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Sale of residence expenses	<input type="checkbox"/> (6) Shipment of P.O.V. (1)	

**SECTION C. SUPERIOR QUALIFICATIONS APPOINTMENT** *(Attach justification to this form stating)*

- Selectee's superior qualifications or special need of the agency
- Factors considering in determining existing pay and reason for setting at the higher rate
- Reasons for authorizing an advanced rate instead of or in addition to a recruitment bonus

**SECTION D. STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT** *(Attach written justification and signed Service Agreement (REE-12B))*

☐ Amount Offered \_\_\_\_\_ *(not to exceed \$10,000 per calendar year or \$60,000 per career)*

☐ Verify Federally Insured Loan to Repay

Payment Options:

☐ Lump Sum Payment

☐ Interval Payments

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**SECTION E. ADVANCE IN PAY** *(Attach Repayment Agreement)*

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- ☐ Domestic Assignment
- ☐ Overseas Assignment *(See Definition in P&P)*
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**SECTION F. CREDITABLE SERVICE FOR LEAVE ACCRUAL** - *Attach supporting documentation (e.g., resume with specific starting and ending dates) and a narrative statement which explains how the skills and experience the employee possesses are:*

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- essential to the new position;
  - were acquired through performance in a non-Federal position or active uniformed service, as appropriate;
  - directly relate to the duties of the position to which he/she is being appointed; and,
  - necessary to achieve an important agency mission or performance goal.
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**RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL INFORMATION**

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1. Selecting Official Name and Title	Signature	Date
2. Second Level Supervisor Name and Title	Signature	Date
3. Budget and Fiscal Officer Name and Title	Signature	Date
4. Area Director/HQ Staff Office/Division Director Name and Title	Signature	Date
5. Team Leader/HRD/AFM Name and Title	Signature	Date

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This form was electronically produced by USDA/ARS/OCIO/ADB.

Enclosure 2